

REGIONAL ADVISORY REPORT

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee 7

May 2002



Prepared for the Maine Department of Transportation by



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction-----	2
2. RTAC 7 Transportation System Recommendations-----	3
Highways/Bridges-----	3
Multimodal Systems-----	3
Highway Enhancements-----	4
Process-----	4
3. Regional Overview-----	5
4. Population Growth-----	6
5. Economic Factors-----	8
6. Land Use Trends-----	9
7. Regional Transportation Systems	
A. Highway Preservation and Improvement-----	10
B. Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement-----	11
C. Passenger Transportation	
Aviation-----	11
Bicycling/Pedestrian Facilities-----	11
Intermodal Facility-----	12
Park & Ride Program-----	12
Transit Services-----	13
D. Freight Transportation-----	14
E. Access Management-----	15
F. Corridor Committees-----	16
G. Scenic Byways-----	16
8. Clean Air Act Conformity-----	16
9. Public Participation-----	16
Appendix A-----	19

1. Introduction

This Regional Advisory Report has been developed by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee for Region 7 (RTAC 7) to assist MDOT in planning future transportation systems investments in Western Maine. RTAC 7 has identified critical needs and opportunities which will benefit residents, businesses and visitors to this region. This report is an update of the 1997 RTAC 7 Regional Advisory Report.

The following members of RTAC 7 were instrumental in development of the recommendations for transportation system improvements:

Harrison Burns, Chair, Rumford
Margery Blonder, Dixfield
Michael Broderick, Bethel
Allen Cressy, Bethel
Joseph Derouche, Mexico
Brett Doney, Paris
Jinger Duryea, Norway

David Guernsey, Kingfield
Arlan Jodrey, Bethel
James Kimball, West Paris
David Leavitt, Farmington
William Lundrigan, Rangeley
Anstiss Morrill, Chesterville
Richard Robinson, Dixfield

Staff assistance was provided by:

David Ames, MDOT Division 7 Engineer
Guy Whittington, MDOT

Herb Thomson, MDOT
Joan Walton, AVCOG

The following policy objectives were set out in the Sensible Transportation Policy Act Rule and are to be used by the RTACs in developing their Regional Advisory Reports:

- a) promote the coordinated and efficient use of all available and future modes of transportation;
- b) meet the diverse transportation needs of the people of the state, including rural and urban populations and the unique mobility needs of the elderly and disabled;
- c) ensure the repair and necessary improvements of roads and bridges throughout the state to provide a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network;
- d) minimize the harmful effects of transportation on public health and on air and water quality, land use, and other natural resources;
- e) reduce the state's reliance on foreign oil and promote reliance on energy efficient forms of transportation;
- f) be consistent with the purposes, goals, and policies of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act;
- g) incorporate a public participation process in which local governmental bodies and the public have timely notice, and opportunity to identify and comment on transportation concerns.

RTAC 7 was mindful of these objectives as it developed its recommendations for MDOT consideration.

2. RTAC 7 Transportation System Recommendations

RTAC 7 VISION

Development of a safe, balanced transportation system that allows for efficient movement of people and goods in a way that meets current and projected economic development efforts and respects the natural environment and human communities.

2002 POLICIES/RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful review of transportation systems in Region 7, RTAC 7 has determined the following issues, listed in order of priority, be considered by MDOT when establishing policies for the Western Maine region.

HIGHWAYS/BRIDGES

1. MDOT should continue its efforts to improve, preserve and enhance the highway and bridge network by maintaining the statewide commitment to eliminate the rural arterial backlog in 10 years and the major collector backlog in 20 years.
2. MDOT should continue its efforts to improve, preserve and enhance the highway and bridge network by supporting continued efforts to enforce truck weight limits.
3. MDOT should pave shoulders on rural roads in Region 7 to improve safety, maintain the edge of highway pavement and to allow for adequate bicycle and pedestrian transportation. MDOT should implement the *Shoulder Paving Prioritization For Roads Within Region 7*, dated August 2000, and its revised Shoulder Surface Type Policy of 2000.

MULTIMODAL SYSTEMS

4. MDOT should establish a policy and a supporting implementation plan for achieving a comprehensive, integrated, practical multimodal transportation system for the state. RTAC 7 recommends that a needs assessment be conducted as a pilot study in Region 7 that would address, among other things: (1) an evaluation of the need for additional park & ride lots and new vanpool and rideshare programs to support increased commuting distances and rural residential growth; (2) establishment of a reliable scheduled transit system that is accessible to those without reliable, regular access to transportation, including disabled, elderly and sick residents as well as commuters and tourists; (3) development of passenger rail use, including connections to public transit system; (4) development of freight rail use, including the use of rail-truck connections; (5) development of bicycle and pedestrian routes; (6) ensure linkage with air, rail and urban transit systems; (7) improvement of the region's air transportation system to become an appropriate and effective alternative to automotive transportation into the region; and (8) support of general aviation as an important part of the region's air transportation system.

HIGHWAY ENHANCEMENTS

5. MDOT should establish a public education program aimed at improving highway safety as a means to reducing traffic congestion.
6. MDOT should streamline its Scenic Byways program's administrative policies and establish a policy to support MDOT-funded corridor management plans.
7. MDOT should encourage the appropriate use of alternative fuels.
8. MDOT should encourage fleet engineering to reduce the intrusiveness of trucks (e.g. air quality, noise pollution, vibration, etc.) on the natural environment and human communities.

PROCESS

9. MDOT should seek sustainable, and perhaps innovative, funding sources that will provide for the funding MDOT needs to implement its transportation program.
10. MDOT should support local corridor committees and adopt consistent construction standards along an entire corridor.
11. MDOT should adopt a policy to solicit local community input and incorporate all input into policy decisions; RTAC 7 should play a central role in this process.
12. MDOT should recognize the impact of local planning in its regional transportation planning efforts and vice versa.

3. Regional Overview

Region 7 is comprised of municipalities in Androscoggin County, Franklin County and most of Oxford County (excluding Brownfield, Denmark, Fryeburg, Hiram, Lovell, Porter, Stow, Stoneham and Sweden). Region 7 borders the State of New Hampshire to the west and Canada to the north. The Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) located in the southern portion of Region 7. ATRC, formerly known as Lewiston-Auburn Area Comprehensive Transportation Study, is comprised of the cities of Auburn and Lewiston, the town of Lisbon and a portion of the town of Sabattus.

The region is diverse in its land use patterns. The southern portion of the region with the Lewiston/Auburn nucleus is highly populated compared to the vast commercial forest land in northern Franklin and Oxford counties. Historical land use patterns reflect the influences of readily available waterpower. The major rivers are the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin. Adjacent to these rivers, the region's major population centers include Auburn, Lewiston, Lisbon, Jay, Livermore Falls, Rumford, Bethel, Mechanic Falls, Norway and Paris. These communities expanded during the industrial growth period, which began in the mid 1800's. The expansion of railroads throughout the region during the mid to late 1800's provided access not only to the major industrial centers, but to smaller centers as well. The rail lines linked communities with Portland and Canada and provided a means of transportation of raw and finished products as well as tourists to the region's resort areas. The loss of rail service to many communities in the early 1900's began several decades of population decline.

The highway system replaced the railroad in the mid 1900's as a major factor in developing land use trends. While the major population and manufacturing centers were anchored in the Lewiston-Auburn, Livermore Falls-Jay, Norway-Paris, Rumford-Mexico and Farmington-Wilton areas, other areas including Eustis, Kingfield, and Oxford developed because of improved highway access.

Communities adjacent to the major transportation corridors of Route 2, Route 4, Route 26, Route 27, Route 108, and Route 196 have developed into major manufacturing, retail and residential areas. These areas are in addition to Lewiston-Auburn which is served by the Maine Turnpike. These highways are the principal routes for transporting raw and finished products of the region's industries, recreational traffic to the region's four-season recreation areas and commuter traffic. Over the past 30 years these corridors have had a major influence on regional land use patterns. Traditionally, manufacturing located in close proximity to these corridors while retail and service land uses have been drawn to the corridors due to traffic volumes and access.

The RTAC 7 region is unique from other areas in Maine. Western Maine has harsh weather conditions in the winter and spring months, which when mixed with the forestry industry and tourists' use of the roads, creates huge maintenance problems. The tourist industry brings an influx of various travel modes ranging from cars to bicycles to tour buses. Both industry users must contend with impacts from spring thaw and other changing road conditions.

4. Population Growth

Region 7 is experiencing redistribution of population with only modest growth in two of the three counties. Recent US Census data show that the region's population is shifting away from urban communities to rural towns and unorganized areas. The region's largest communities, Lewiston, Auburn, Lisbon, Rumford and Farmington, all lost population between 1990 and 2000; Lewiston lost more than 10% of its 1990 population. At the same time, many suburban communities, especially in the southern part of the region, gained more than 10% of their 1990 populations, notably Buckfield, Durham, Greene, Hartford, Hebron, Minot, Otisfield, Poland, Sabattus and Turner. Most towns north of a line through Peru and Jay, regardless of size, lost population.

Between 1990 and 2000, population in Androscoggin County decreased by 1.4%, while Franklin County and Oxford County experienced modest population increases of 1.6% and 2.6%, respectively. The overall population growth in the state during this time totaled 3.8%.

	Population		Difference	
	1990	2000	#	%
Androscoggin County	105,259	103,793	-1,466	-1.39
Franklin County	29,008	29,467	459	1.58
Oxford County (less RTAC 6 towns)	43,567	44,715	1,148	2.64
Region 7 Totals	177,834	177,975	141	0.08
State of Maine	1,227,928	1,274,923	46,995	3.83

Source: US Census

The urban municipalities in the region, most noticeably within the MPO, have experienced a population decline while traditional rural communities are growing. From 1990 to 2000, the overall population growth in Region 7 was less than 1%, however the population growth in the region, outside of the MPO, was nearly 5%.

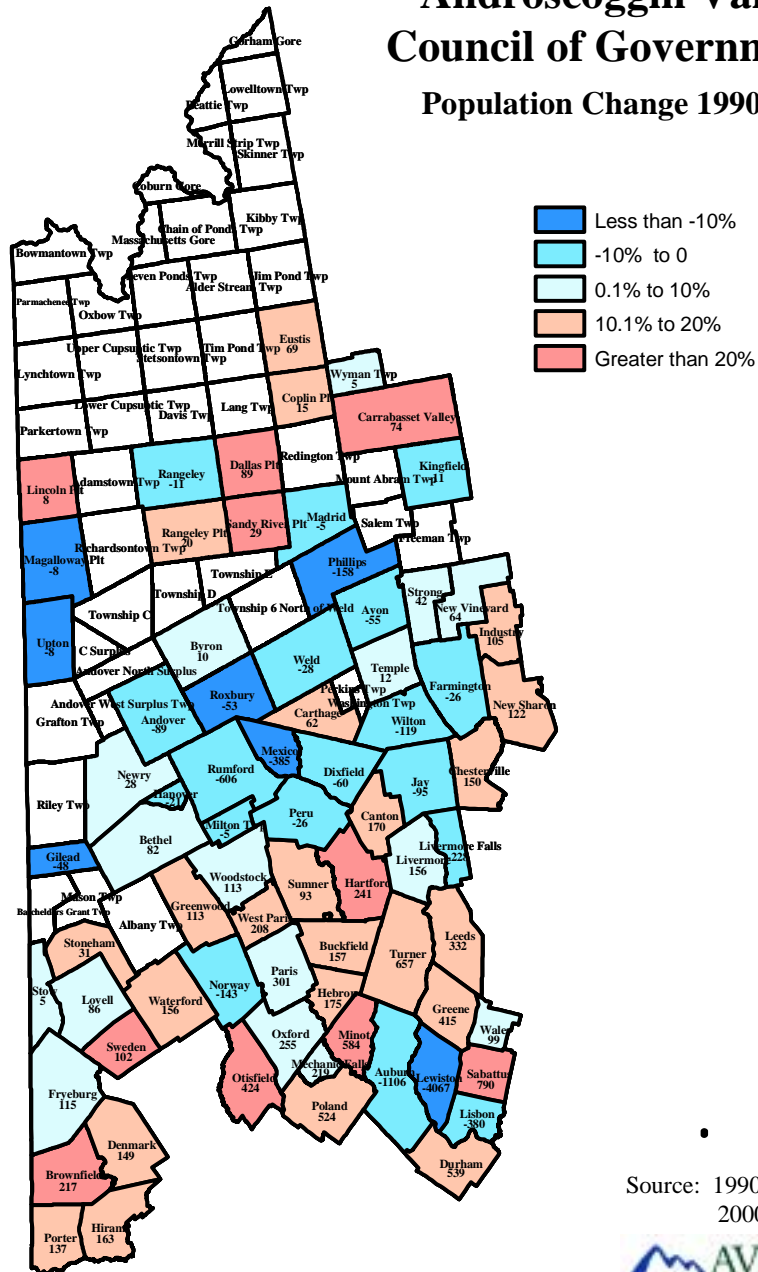
The population of the MPO communities of Auburn, Lewiston, Lisbon and Sabattus collectively dropped from 77,219 in 1990 to 72,375 in 2000, which represents a population loss of 6%. The most rural of the MPO communities, Sabattus, experienced a 21% increase in population. This increase is consistent with growth patterns in other rural communities in Region 7 and is indicative of the suburbanization that is occurring in Western Maine.

	Population		Difference	
	1990	2000	#	%
ATRC Region	77,219	72,375	-4,844	-6.3
Remainder of Region 7	100,615	105,600	4,985	4.9
Region 7 Totals	177,834	177,975	141	0.08
State of Maine	1,227,928	1,274,923	46,995	3.83

Source: US Census

Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments

Population Change 1990 - 2000



Source: 1990 Census
2000 Census



5. Economic Factors

Fifty years ago, one out of every two jobs in Maine was in the manufacturing sector. That figure has now fallen to around 15% and is expected to further decline over the next decade. During the 1990's, Western Maine remained very highly concentrated in the traditional, mature industries such as leather, textiles, apparel and wood products. Of the region's total job base, 25-35% were in these very industries that are being the hardest hit by global competition.

Projections from 1990-2020 conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Southern Maine indicate that the tri-county population will increase only slightly by 7.5%. Total employment in this region is expected to increase by 25% from 1990-2020. This growth is expected to be primarily in the service sector which is projected to grow by 87%. During the same time period, employment in manufacturing is expected to decrease by 28%. Personal income is expected to increase almost 200% while real disposable personal income is expected to increase 54%.

Employment by Major Industry Division 1990-2000									
Industry Division	Androscoggin County			Franklin County			Oxford County		
	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	833	519	-37.7%	55	81	47.3%	178	229	28.6%
Construction and Mining	2,130	2,372	11.4%	365	573	57.0%	1,060	973	-8.2%
Manufacturing	9,030	7,904	-12.5%	4,492	2,837	-36.8%	4,756	4,101	-13.8%
Transportation, Public Utilities	1,399	1,798	28.5%	242	265	9.5%	458	591	29.0%
Wholesale Trade	2,229	2,633	18.1%	143	283	97.9%	172	244	41.9%
Retail Trade	8,252	9,121	10.5%	2,301	2,615	13.6%	3,036	3,339	10.0%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	2,377	2,578	8.4%	485	509	4.9%	469	501	6.8%
Services	10,227	15,052	47.2%	2,102	2,811	33.7%	3,809	5,101	33.9%
State Government	469	543	15.8%	389	421	8.2%	193	329	70.5%
Local Government	3,938	4,405	11.9%	1,105	1,339	21.2%	2,176	2,602	19.6%
Total	40,884	47,015	15.0%	11,679	11,734	0.5%	16,307	18,011	10.4%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

MDOT's 1998-2018 Twenty Year Transportation Plan contemplates that "the shift in employment from manufacturing to service industries may also increase travel since the service sector tends to generate more traffic per employee than does the manufacturing sector." The table above confirms that the shift from manufacturing to service industries is occurring in each county in this region. This transition is most noticeable in Franklin County, where employment in the manufacturing sector decreased by 37% and employment in the retail trade sector increased by 14%. In the tri-county region, there was an average decrease in manufacturing employment of 21% and an average increase of 38% in employment in the services sector.

The efficient movement of goods and people through Western Maine is critical to the economic vitality of this region. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, Canada is Maine's largest export market with a total of nearly \$896 million in exports in 2000. The largest export to Canada in 2000 was in lumber and wood products, comprising 31.2% of total exports, followed by fishing, hunting and trapping (14.6%) and paper and allied products (11.5%). In 1999, approximately 26% of residents employed in the lumber/wood products industry in Maine came from this region. Given this region's proximity to Canada and the abundance of resources supporting the lumber and woods product industry, we have a high volume of heavy trucks traveling through the region. The truck traffic in this region, coupled with the substandard condition of many of our roads, has a continuous negative impact on the deterioration of the backlog highways and limits economic potential of the region.

Due to an abundance of natural resources, many tourism-related businesses have flourished in the region. Tourism has been identified through several State of Maine reports as a key industry for business development opportunities. According to the Western Maine Lakes and Mountains Tourism Council, an estimated 1.2 million travelers visited the Western Maine Lakes and Mountains region (comprised of Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, plus the Sebago Lakes region) in 1997, making it the 5th most popular destination in the state. According to a survey of visitors by the Council, most travelers to Western Maine chose the region as a primary destination for their vacation rather than a pass-through, with the most popular activities being touring, skiing, special events and relaxing in the country setting. Eight of 21 licensed downhill ski facilities in the state are located in Western Maine, including the two with the greatest number of skiers.

According to the 2001-2002 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Androscoggin Valley Economic Development District, an estimated \$88 million was spent in Franklin County by tourists in 1996 and the total full-time equivalent jobs created from the tourism industry was 1,949.

6. Land Use Trends

Land use patterns have had a significant impact on the region's transportation systems because distribution of land uses directly relates to vehicle miles traveled. Retail businesses are locating to areas outside of traditional villages and downtowns. Over the past ten years, this region has experienced significant "big box" retail development along major highway corridors. This movement of commercial uses away from traditional villages and downtowns to the major highways can negatively impact traffic flow and highway capacity. This trend also places increased demands on public transportation for people without access to private vehicles.

A number of factors contribute to this trend including land availability, access, parking, and visibility. Unfortunately, conflicts often arise between the desire to move traffic safely and efficiently along major routes and the wish to develop these areas for commercial and retail uses. These land use patterns are evident in Auburn, Lewiston, Oxford, Farmington, and Jay.

Many of the largest communities in this region lost population between 1990 and 2000, including Auburn, Farmington, Jay, Lewiston, Lisbon, Mexico, Norway, Rumford and Wilton. With the exception of Mexico, these communities have been identified by the Maine State Planning Office (SPO) as being regional service center communities.

Service center communities typically offer opportunities for employment, medical and social services, higher education and cultural activities. Increased demand for the services and opportunities of the region's service center communities, coupled with declining populations in these communities, has resulted in changing traffic patterns. Service center communities are destinations for residents and commuters who live in adjacent communities but rely on the services available in these hubs.

The urban core of Lewiston-Auburn is the region's primary service center offering all of these amenities. In spite of continued population loss since 1980, the role of Lewiston-Auburn as the primary service center in Region 7 has not diminished.

7. Regional Transportation Systems

A. Highway Preservation and Improvement

In 2000, the Maine legislature mandated the elimination of all rural arterial backlogs within 10 years and MDOT set a goal to improve all rural major collector backlog highways within 20 years. Backlog roads are defined as those roads that have not been built to current highway construction standards during their lifetime. While we have seen substantial improvements made to the condition of the region's highway network over the past 10 years, Division 7 continues to have the highest percentage of backlog miles (16.9%) of any division in the state.

According to MDOT's 2002-2007 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan, there are 611.1 miles of rural highway backlog (15.3% of the statewide total) and 63.1 miles (1.6%) of urban highway backlog in Division 7. The rural backlog includes 37.4 miles (32.2%) of National Highway System (NHS)/principal arterials, 60.0 miles (22.4%) of minor arterials and 316.9 miles (16.5%) of major collector highways and 196.8 miles (11.7%) of minor collector highways. The urban backlog in Division 7 includes 1.1 miles (0.9%) of NHS/principal arterials, 26.9 miles (10.0%) of minor arterials and 35.1 miles (1.8%) of major collector highways.

Division 7 Highway Reconstruction Summary				
<i>Classification</i>	<i>Highway Reconstruction Backlog Mileage</i>		<i>Proposed Highway Reconstruction Mileage</i>	
	<i># Miles</i>	<i>% of Statewide Total</i>	<i># Miles</i>	<i>% of Statewide Total</i>
NHS/Principal Arterial	38.5	33.1	22.9	27.6
Minor Arterial	86.9	32.4	29.2	31.9
Major Collector	352.0	18.3	87.1	16.6
Total	477.4	20.7	139.2	19.9

Source: Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan 2002-2007

B. Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement

There are 59 bridges listed as needing rehabilitation or replacement in the 2002-2007 Six-Year Plan in Region 7. Twenty-two of these bridges have been included in the 2002-2003 BTIP. There are no extraordinary bridges in Region 7 in the 2002-2007 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

Due to the extremely high cost of removing the lead-based paint and repainting the steel on the older bridges, the current MDOT policy is to not paint truss bridges until they rust to the point of needing to be replaced. This practice will not only result in the loss of historic bridges but it will add to the number of bridges needing replacement rather than rehabilitation. Many of these bridges will be among the most costly to replace. According to MDOT, there are 21 steel truss bridges in Region 7. Of those, 8 are slated for replacement and one is scheduled for rehabilitation in the 2002-2007 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

C. Passenger Transportation

Aviation

The RTAC 7 region has numerous airports with varying capabilities, none of which include commercial service airports. In addition to these regional airports, a group of communities in northern Franklin County has submitted a sponsorship application to MDOT for establishment of an economic development airport to serve Western Maine. MDOT will soon begin a feasibility analysis of the benefits and needs for such a facility. If MDOT's consultants find there will be economic benefits from such a facility then MDOT should support the project and commit to advancing its establishment. If such a facility is established, it will be necessary to provide for intermodal connections for passengers to arrive at their intended destinations.

Public Airports in Region 7	
Auburn Lewiston Municipal Airport	Cities of Auburn and Lewiston
Colonel Dyke Field	Town of Bethel
Oxford County Regional Airport	Oxford County
Rangeley Municipal Airport	Town of Rangeley
Sugarloaf Regional Airport	Town of Carrabasset Valley

Bicycling/Pedestrian Facilities

The RTAC 7 Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee was formed in the summer of 1999 for the purpose of promoting bicycle and pedestrian use of the roads within Region 7. In October 1999, at the request of MDOT, the subcommittee undertook the task of identifying and prioritizing on-road bicycle routes in the region. The "Shoulder Paving Prioritization For Roads Within Region 7" report was submitted to the MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation in August 2000. The roads ultimately determined worthy of inclusion in the report were considered to be important to the region because they are popular with bicyclists and pedestrians or provide important links within the region.

MDOT has designated four bicycle tours in Western Maine, including the Evans Notch Loop, the Grafton Notch Loop, Franklin Heritage Loop, and the Lake Auburn loop. However, the condition of some of the roads along each of these loops is substandard. Such deficiencies include insufficient shoulders, heavy truck traffic and narrow roads. The safe use of these loops by bicyclists and pedestrians is of great concern to residents and municipal officials throughout Region 7.

Intermodal Facility

MDOT has hired consultants to study the feasibility of siting a passenger intermodal facility at the Auburn Lewiston Municipal Airport in Auburn. If constructed, this facility will provide a seamless connection to intercity transit, air and rail services.

Park & Ride Program

Park and ride facilities are important elements of a region's transportation network which offer travelers an inexpensive alternative to single occupancy vehicles. Park and ride lots in Region 7 are used by commuters who must travel long distances between home and work as well as residents who wish to combine trips to regional centers such as Augusta, Brunswick or Portland. The labor markets of Portland, Bath/Brunswick and Augusta are within reasonable commuting time for most Region 7 communities.

There are eight formal park and ride facilities with a total of 365 parking spaces in Region 7. It should be noted that there are no formal park and ride lots along Route 26, which is part of the National Highway System and has a direct connection to the Maine Turnpike in Gray.

There are numerous informal park and ride lots throughout Western Maine which have been established by commuters at certain highway intersections. MDOT should evaluate existing park and ride facilities in Region 7 to determine whether they are sufficient to meet current and future demands. This evaluation should include an analysis of the need for new or expanded park and ride facilities near proposed turnpike interchanges (e.g. Route 9 in Sabattus).

The following table identifies the location, size and owner of the park and ride facilities in the region.

Park & Ride Facilities in Region 7			
Location	# of Spaces	Owner	Description
AUBURN Maine Turnpike Exit 12	137	Maine Turnpike Authority	Paved, striped and lighted
BUCKFIELD Intersection of Routes 117 & 140	15	Town of Buckfield	Paved
DIXFIELD Intersection of Routes 2 & 142 (behind town office)	10	Town of Dixfield	Paved
FARMINGTON Junction of Routes. 2, 4 and Intervale Road	52	State of Maine	Paved
LEWISTON Maine Turnpike Exit 13	92	Maine Turnpike Authority	Paved, striped and lighted
MECHANIC FALLS Route 121 (in Depot Square Transportation Center)	14	Town of Mechanic Falls	Paved, striped and lighted
SABATTUS Intersection of Routes 9 & 126	25	Town of Sabattus	Paved
WEST PERU Intersection of Route 108 and Androscoggin River bridge	20	State of Maine	Gravel

Transit Services

Public transit is important to those people without regular access to an automobile. Seniors, disabled, and handicapped persons most often rely on public transit. However, there is growing need for establishment of a reliable transit system in Region 7 that can meet the needs of the general population as well as that of tourists.

The majority of Region 7 is comprised of rural development, with very small pockets of population centers. Due to the rural environment, people are spread out between necessary services such as health care facilities, shopping and other community services. Public transportation in the region enables persons with disabilities, and/or older persons to remain in their own homes (as opposed to being institutionalized or placed in a nursing home) and be transported as needed to necessary services.

In Region 7, public transit services include Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS) and Vermont Transit. The Lewiston/Auburn Transit Committee (LATC), a committee created by an interlocal agreement between the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, owns the public fixed route, fixed schedule service in the Lewiston/Auburn area which is operated under contract by WMTS. WMTS, the designated regional transit provider for Region 7, provides demand response and fixed-route transportation services to all residents of Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford Counties. WMTS also provides human service transportation, including Medicaid trips, to all destinations.

Vermont Transit is an intercity bus service transporting passengers from Maine to Boston, with several daily runs through Lewiston.

Community Concepts, Inc. (CCI) provides transportation for the general public, special education students, Medicaid recipients and Maine Department of Human Services clients throughout Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties. CCI owns 18 vans and the number of volunteer drivers now exceeds 300. In 1999, CCI opened a dispatch center in Farmington to meet the increased demand for transportation in Franklin County. There are several other non-profit agencies which provide transportation to limited segments of the population in Western Maine (e.g. Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice, Seniors Plus, American Cancer Society, etc.).

The Towns of Lisbon and Mechanic Falls operate daily commuter transit services to Lewiston from those respective communities. The Town of Newry recently started a seasonal transit system that takes residents and tourists between the Sunday River Resort and downtown Bethel. Other communities throughout the region have expressed a desire for greater transit services for the general public, including Farmington, Livermore Falls and the Oxford Hills area.

With the aging of the baby boom population, we can expect increased demand on alternative modes of transportation in rural Maine. MDOT needs to do the appropriate planning now so we can accommodate the transportation needs of tourists as well as residents. Public transit must be reasonably available as an alternative mode of transportation for our residents.

New passenger rail opportunities are becoming evident for Region 7 with the introduction of Amtrak service between Boston and Portland. There is strong support for the return of passenger rail service in Region 7. In the summer of 2001, RTAC 7 surveyed municipal officials and corridor committee members throughout Region 7 to determine the importance of regional transportation systems. Seventy-eight percent of survey respondents indicated they would support the return of passenger rail service in Region 7. In order for passenger rail to be viable and successful in this region, we will need to have a transit system in place that can provide connections to resources, amenities, desired destinations, etc.

D. Freight Transportation

The overall condition of our highway network is directly impacted by the volume and weight of the trucks which move products into and out of the region. The vast majority of freight movement in Maine is via truck. According to MDOT, nearly 90% of all freight transportation in Maine in 1998 was by truck. Freight transportation by truck continues to increase in Maine.

Maine sends and receives among the highest percentage of freight by truck in the nation. According to the Maine Motor Transport Association, 82% of Maine's municipalities are accessible only by roads for freight movement. With this region's reliance on the lumber/wood products industry, enforcement of truck weight limits is of great concern.

In the RTAC 7 region, the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad company (SLR) owns nearly 90 miles of active line from Portland to Montreal. The SLR has the only hi-cube, double-stack clearance in northern New England for intermodal trains. The Guilford Rail System has approximately 86 miles of active tracks in this region. The Rumford spur runs between Leeds Junction and Mead Paper in Rumford and includes service to International Paper Company in Jay. The Lewiston/Auburn Railroad Company owns 5 miles of active line and the state owns 9 miles of the Lewiston Lower Road rail line.

A rail/truck intermodal facility was constructed in Auburn in 1994 and expanded in 2001. It serves as a shipping and receiving area where goods are transferred from the railroad onto trucks for delivery elsewhere. Through this facility, industrial access has increased in the Lewiston/Auburn area, with several businesses committing to expansion because of this service.

E. Access Management

System preservation can be attained through aggressive access management. Available highway capacity on arterial highways is often "chewed-up" by driveways, conflict points and inadequate intersection controls and results in reduced travel times.

In 2000, the legislature adopted LD 2550, An Act to Ensure Cost Effective & Safe Highways in Maine. The purpose of this act is to assure the safety of the traveling public, protect highways against negative impacts on highway drainage systems, preserve mobility and productivity, and avoid long-term costs associated with constructing new highway capacity. The act is intended to conserve state highway investment, enhance productivity, manage highway capacity, maintain rural arterial speed, promote safety and conserve air, water and land resources.

In accordance with this act, MDOT has developed rules for implementation which will take effect early in 2002. The rules apply to new or modified curb openings (driveways and entrances) on non-urban state and state-aid highways. The standards regulate corner clearances, drainage, driveway spacing, driveway widths, parking, shared driveways and sight distance.

Generally, mobility arterials are defined as non-urban compact arterials that have a posted speed limit of 40 m.p.h. or more and are part of an arterial corridor located between urban compact areas or "service centers" that have 5,000 average annual daily traffic for at least 50% of its length. The rules define retrograde arterials as mobility arterials where the access-related crash-per-mile rate exceeds the 1999 statewide average for arterials of the same posted speed limit. In addition to meeting the standards for mobility arterials, mitigation measures will be required along retrograde arterials before new curb openings will be permitted by MDOT. Retrograde arterials are prevalent throughout Region 7 and can be found in 20 of the region's communities along segments of Routes 2, 4, 26, 121, 126 and 202.

F. Corridor Committees

Corridor committees are made up of interested residents who live or work along a specific highway corridor. Corridor committees prioritize needs and deficiencies of the corridor and convey that prioritization to MDOT and RTAC 7. Corridor committees also monitor design, scheduling and progress of construction projects along their respective corridors. The RTAC 7 region has had several corridor committees develop plans over the last decade which have influenced policies and projects set out by MDOT, RTAC 7, and municipalities. These committees include: Route 2, Route 4, Route 26, Route 27 and Route 219. These subregional advisory committees have made recommendations through reports that should be considered by MDOT and RTAC 7. Recommendations made by these committees have been presented to the MDOT and the RTAC 7 when considering the Six-Year Plan, BTIP and other transportation initiatives.

G. Scenic Byways

In addition to the corridor committees identified above, there are four scenic byways committees in Region 7, which were established to develop and implement corridor management plans of scenic resources along the region's four state scenic byways. The Route 27 Scenic Byway was designated as a scenic byway by the state in 1971, the Route 26 Scenic Byway was designated in 1974 and the Route 4 and Route 17 Scenic Byways were designated in 1982.

Enactment of ISTEA in 1991 resulted in establishment of the national scenic byways program. Currently, federal funding for improvements is anticipated through 2003. The Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway, which follows Routes 4 and 17, received National Scenic Byway designation in 2000. In 2000, Maine was awarded \$600,000 in federal scenic byways grants. None of the scenic byways grant applications in Region 7 were funded in 2000 and concern has been expressed that state grant guidelines are too restrictive for older byways which were designated under different criteria decades ago. MDOT should strive to achieve a balance with the older byways and the new program guidelines.

8. *Clean Air Act Conformity*

Androscoggin County has been designated as an ozone nonattainment area based on exceedences of the 1-hour national ambient air quality standards. Consequently, conformity determinations are required for the adoption, acceptance, approval or support of transportation plans and regionally significant projects within Androscoggin County. Franklin and Oxford counties have been classified as attainment areas and are not subject to conformity analyses.

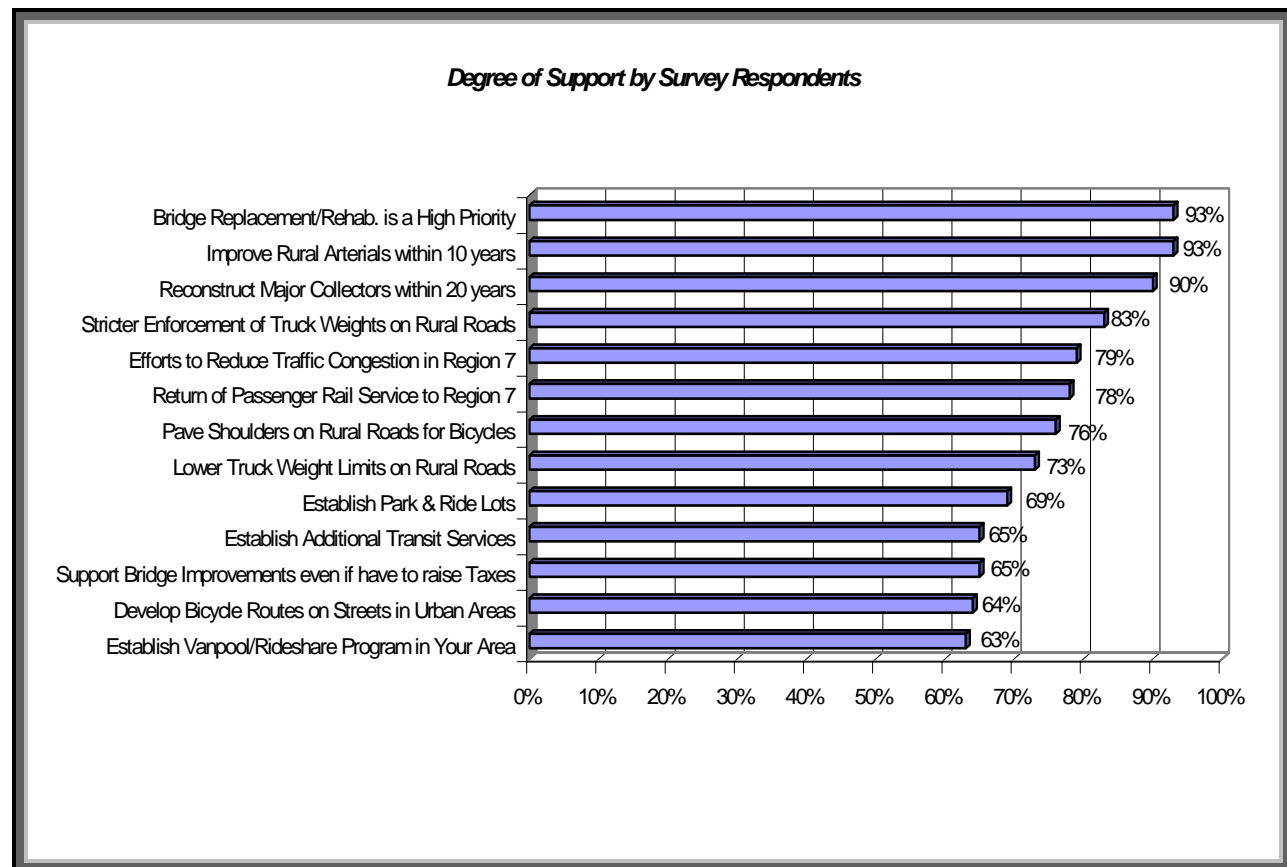
9. *Public Participation*

Public participation is a critical component to the regional transportation planning process. In order to gain feedback and input from municipal officials and the general public, an aggressive public outreach program was undertaken through the summer of 2001.

RTAC 7 scheduled public meetings in Bethel, Farmington, Livermore Falls, Mechanic Falls, Paris, Rumford and Stratton. These meetings were advertised in newspapers of general circulation in the region and corresponding sub regions (e.g. Sun-Journal and Bethel Citizen). AVCOG distributed public notices for the subregional meetings to all municipal offices in the tri-county region; each town clerk was asked to post the notice on its community bulletin board. RTAC 7 members contacted their constituency to promote attendance and participation at these meetings. In some instances, RTAC 7 members wrote letters to the editor of their local newspapers in an effort to increase the level of awareness of the RAR project.

In May 2001, RTAC 7 distributed 540 surveys to municipal officials and corridor committee members throughout Region 7; communities within the metropolitan planning organization were included in the distribution of this survey. Residents who attended the public meetings also were asked to complete the survey. Municipal officials who received the survey include managers, councilors, selectmen, planning board members and road commissioners. Every effort was made to eliminate duplication of mailings from multiple databases so as to prevent additional responses from individuals who serve in dual capacities as municipal representatives and members of a corridor committee.

A total of 150 surveys were completed and returned (a response rate of 28%). Survey results have been ranked according to the level of support or agreement by respondents. The following table identifies the highest priority issues among survey respondents.



Overall, the survey results indicate that improvement to the region's highways and bridges is of paramount concern. Ninety-three percent of the survey respondents support MDOT's policy of improving rural arterials over a 10-year period and 93% agree that bridge replacement and/or rehabilitation should continue to be a high priority for MDOT. A total of 90% of the respondents support improving rural major collectors over a 20-year period. In keeping with sentiments to improve highway and bridge systems, 83% of respondents indicated a strong desire for stricter enforcement of truck weight limits on the region's rural roads.

Detailed survey results and comments received during the information gathering process are included in Appendix A. The survey results and comments generated at the public meetings were integral to the RTAC's prioritization of regional transportation systems for this report.

RTAC 7 wishes to thank all municipal officials, corridor committee members and residents who responded to the opinion survey or attended the public meetings.

Appendix A

In May 2001, AVCOG distributed 540 surveys to municipal officials and corridor committee members throughout Region 7. The communities within the metropolitan planning organization were included in the distribution of this survey. Municipal officials who received the survey included managers, councilors, selectmen, planning board members and road commissioners. Every effort was made to eliminate duplication of mailings from multiple databases so as to prevent additional responses from individuals who serve in dual capacities as municipal representatives and members of a corridor committee.

Additionally, the survey was made available to the public at each of the subregional public meetings held throughout May and June. Approximately 12 surveys were actually taken by meeting participants, however, only two were completed and returned to AVCOG for tabulation.

A total of 150 surveys were completed and returned to AVCOG. This represents an overall response rate of 28%.

HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES

Principal Arterials in Region 7 (Androscoggin, Oxford and Franklin Counties) include Routes 2, 4, 26, 196, 202 and the Maine Turnpike. Major and minor collector roads in the region include other numbered state highways. According to the Maine Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Strategic Plan, "...our most dramatic challenge is that our infrastructure is aging. Roads, bridges...and other facilities that were built decades ago are now reaching, or have surpassed, their life expectancies. In many cases, this translates into the reality that repairs and rehabilitation are no longer appropriate. The time has come for many replacement and reconstruction projects. This is especially true for a significant number of major bridges in the state, some of which offer the only practical and cost-effective method for crossing rivers and other bodies of water."

Arterial Reconstruction Backlog. There are many rural locations in the region where arterials need reconstruction to bring them up to modern safety standards. MDOT is operating under a legislative mandate to bring rural arterials up to standards within 10 years. There are no programs for urban arterials.

1. Do you support the policy of improving rural arterials over a 10-year period?

Support 93 % Oppose 5 % Don't Know 1 % No Answer 1 %

2. Would you support an urban arterial improvement program even if it meant that your taxes might increase?

Support 55 % Oppose 35 % Don't Know 9 % No Answer 2 %

Major Collector Reconstruction Backlog. There are many major collector corridors in the region which do not meet federal or state construction standards and are in need of reconstruction.

3. *Do you support MDOT's plans to reconstruct these rural roads over a 20-year period (financial constraints preclude a shorter timetable). There are no programs to improve major collectors in urban areas.*

Support 90 % Oppose 7 % Don't Know 2 % No Answer 1 %

4. *Would you support a program to improve major collectors in urban areas even if it meant that your taxes might increase?*

Support 52 % Oppose 40 % Don't Know 7 % No Answer 1 %

Bridges. Because of the age distribution of State and local bridges (many were built in the 1930's) future bridge costs are expected to rise. Within the next six years, MDOT is planning to upgrade 23 state bridges and 37 local bridges in the region.

5. *Do you feel that bridge replacement/rehabilitation should continue to be a high priority?*

Support 93 % Oppose 2 % Don't Know 3 % No Answer 2 %

6. *Would you support MDOT's bridge replacement/reconstruction efforts even if it meant that your taxes might increase?*

Support 65 % Oppose 24 % Don't Know 8 % No Answer 3 %

Truck Weight Limits. Rural roads are as important to the economy of Maine as the Turnpike. One of the major highway problems identified by RTAC-7 is the increasing use of rural local and collector roads as freight delivery routes by heavy trucks which results in road damage and wear. This is partly the result of the fact that trucks are allowed to carry more weight on rural roads than on the interstate.

7. *Do you support lowering truck weight limits on rural roads from 100,000 pounds to 80,000 pounds (the interstate limit).*

Support 73 % Oppose 24 % Don't Know 2 % No Answer 1 %

8. *Do you support stricter enforcement of truck weight limits on rural roads?*

Support 83 % Oppose 13 % Don't Know 3 % No Answer 1 %

Traffic Congestion. Maine's highways carry an ever-growing volume of vehicles. MDOT estimates that highway use has grown from about 7.5 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1980 to more than 13 billion VMT in 2000. This is projected to grow by 18% to about 16 billion VMT by 2020. Increasing demands by businesses, residents and tourists can result in a deterioration of operating conditions and congestion along primary corridors.

9. *Would you support efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the region?*

Support 79 % Oppose 9 % Don't Know 8 % No Answer 4 %

Park and Ride Program. Currently, Maine has 34 park and ride lots throughout the state with an overall capacity of 1,692 spaces. In this region, there are 7 park and ride lots with an overall capacity of 290 spaces, including 168 spaces adjacent to the Maine Turnpike in Lewiston and Auburn.

10. *Do you support the establishment of additional park and ride lots in your area?*

Support 69 % Oppose 17 % Don't Know 11 % No Answer 2 %

Vanpool/Rideshare Program. MDOT has run a commuter van program for over 20 years. In 1996, MDOT initiated "Go Augusta" to reduce congestion in the capitol area through a vanpool program, a computerized rideshare program and an education campaign.

11. *Do you support the establishment of a similar program in your area?*

Support 63 % Oppose 21 % Don't Know 13 % No Answer 3 %

12. *Do you support the establishment of additional transit services in your area?*

Support 65 % Oppose 17 % Don't Know 15 % No Answer 3 %

Access Management. The uncontrolled proliferation of driveways and entrances along a highway can greatly reduce its traffic carrying capacity. Access management (controlling the number, location and design of driveways and entrances while still allowing access to property) can be an effective tool in limiting congestion and the negative impacts of suburban sprawl. Only a few municipalities in this region have adopted effective access management controls.

13. *In the absence of local controls, would you support an access management program administered at the state level?*

Support 49 % Oppose 33 % Don't Know 12 % No Answer 7 %

RAILROADS

MDOT has invested money in track and bed rehabilitation in support of proposed AMTRAK service to southern Maine. With federal designation of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad (SLA) corridor as a high speed corridor through western Maine, AMTRAK service between Portland and Montreal may become a reality.

14. Do you support the return of passenger rail service to Region 7?

Support 78 % Oppose 13 % Don't Know 4 % No Answer 5 %

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION

During the year 2000, RTAC-7 created a Bicycle Subcommittee and charged it with the task of developing a regional bicycle plan that would prioritize shoulder paving needs on the region's highways. MDOT has adopted criteria for when a highway should receive a paved shoulder. This new policy, in conjunction with the regional bicycle plan, will be used to determine future shoulder paving needs. At this time, RTAC-7 has not addressed the need for off-road bicycle facilities such as the new bicycle trail in Brunswick or bicycle needs in urban areas.

15. Do you support paved shoulders for bicycle transportation in rural areas?

Support 76 % Oppose 15 % Don't Know 3 % No Answer 7 %

16. Do you support development of off-road bicycle trails?

Support 58 % Oppose 29 % Don't Know 6 % No Answer 7 %

17. Would you support a program to develop bicycle routes on streets in urban areas?

Support 64 % Oppose 18 % Don't Know 11 % No Answer 7 %

AIRPORTS/AVIATION

There are 5 public airports and approximately a dozen private air fields in western Maine. There is no regularly scheduled passenger service in western Maine. The Federal Aviation Administration recently enacted stringent regulations regarding the provision of on-site emergency services for all airports with scheduled passenger service. This new mandate may render this service cost-prohibitive to smaller public airports.

18. Do you support establishment of scheduled passenger air service in the region?

Support 54 % Oppose 24 % Don't Know 17 % No Answer 5 %

19. *Do you believe improvement of the region's air transportation system is an appropriate and effective alternative to automotive transportation into the region?*

Agree 45 % Disagree 38 % Don't Know 12 % No Answer 5 %

20. *Are privately owned aircraft an important part of the region's air transportation system?*

Agree 38 % Disagree 29 % Don't Know 29 % No Answer 4 %

COMMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents were asked to provide comments about concerns or issues raised by the survey or any other regional transportation issues. The comments were consolidated into topical areas for the purposes of better understanding the needs and issues in Western Maine. The comments were not edited for content, grammar or spelling and are presented verbatim, as follows:

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

- Access Management should be for subdivision roads only.
- RTAC 7 and MDOT should offer greater assistance to municipalities to assist them in dealing with access control and other traffic planning matters.
- Access management was implemented in the Town of Mexico by MDOT. But when a lawsuit was threatened, MDOT backed off and removed curbing and put the Town in the middle of a controversy with its downtown businesses and the remaining businesses wanted these curbs removed. Access management without state backup and common sense is useless.

AIRPORTS/AVIATION

- Oxford County Airport should become more user friendly - automated credit card for fuel so pilots can get fuel on weekends and at night.
- Air and rail travel are jokes foisted on us by juvenile "lobbyists".
- Aviation provides speed but at a higher cost.
- Increase air service means increase air sounds – I think "quiet" Maine is far superior to air traffic noise. Why are the improvements all for increased tourist traffic? How about "MAINE a great place to LIVE". After all, isn't that why tourists come to Maine, to see it as it is?? Thanks for listening.

- Increased tourism and commercial visitation to Western Maine may benefit from a fully integrated intermodal passenger system. To suggest scheduled rail or air traffic into the area without addressing local transport requirements is irresponsible.

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN/ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

- Bicycle traffic on major routes and in towns are a huge safety hazard, as most cyclists create dangerous situations by not yielding to vehicular traffic (ex. Riding in the travel lanes, around blind corners, etc.). Bicycles should yield to autos, not the other way around.
- I would like to see increased funding and attention to provide better snowmobile crossings at state highways and bridges.
- I strongly believe that some sort of bicycle registration should be developed to help defray the cost of these bike-ways. Why not??
- I do not wish that any gas money be used for bicycle/pedestrian transportation. If bicycle people want to tax themselves then ok. I don't want to see any money from gas taxes used on anything except repairing roads and bridges for cars & trucks. That includes support for state police. Truck fees can support that portion of enforcement. Traffic control is not repair.
- Right now our roads in Western Maine are deplorable. Spending money on bike paths is not going to help defray the cost of badly needed road work. Our priority should be with road improvement. Forget bike paths for the time being.
- Bicycle paths in conjunction with roads make sense but separate bike paths are a vast waste of precious transportation dollars and provide little return.
- Yes to bike shoulders, enables walkers as well.
- I feel that in this next RAR, we should be primarily focused on alternative modes of transportation. After all, that was why the RTACs were formed in the first place.
- Bike lanes on at least one side should be put on every construction project in the state including subdivisions.

HIGHWAYS & BRIDGES

- MDOT traffic engineering practices need review. There is an almost schizophrenic split between emphasizing alternative modes of transportation on the one hand, and enabling increased use of the automobile through the reconstruction of roads whenever they get to a highly congested level.

- Need to slow down big trucks, they are going too fast. Speed limits should be enforced more. Some small towns need DOT directional signs so visitors can find them.
- I feel too much money is spent on simply repaving roads - when reconstruction of the roadbeds would probably result in longer lasting roads. I feel the state should spend more time studying this.
- Thank you for soliciting citizen opinion. The greatest need in this region is for Route 117 from South Paris to Turner to be reconstructed with paved shoulders with a marked bicycle path and possibly 2-3 passing pull-out lanes on Streaked Mtn. The overweight trucks wreak havoc on this road every year. Route 4 should have a restricted access. Since widening, people treat it like an express way, but with ever increasing curb cuts accidents have soared. Route 124 should have access roads for housing developments.
- Rural municipalities need low-cost engineering services to assist the design of road reconstruction projects.
- When Routes 26, 2 & 4 are rebuilt, any city or town that can be by-passed to increase traffic flow at the rate of 55 mph. This will increase the flow of traffic and allow those that want to visit a town, village or city to get there easily and quickly. There would be a lot less road rage and frustration. Also on the hills, there should be truck lanes.
- DOT is ruining downtowns. Court St. in Auburn has been made a race track so people who commute too far too fast can endanger the few remaining pedestrians who dare to walk there. To hell with these selfish commuters - DOT must stop its mindless attention to maximized vehicular movement and let people take back their towns from the automobile. Cities should not be obligated to oversee the ruination of their downtowns for the speed & convenience of long distance commuters, too many of whom are driving alone in giant gas-guzzling SUVs.
- There should be a few “turn-offs” for cars at different locations along Route 27, from Stratton to Coburn Gore. One such place being between the South Branch Bridge and the Pat Taylor Corner where people can safely park to take pictures and enjoy the view of the mountains. As it is now, many people stop in precarious places where the truck traffic is heavy six days a week. It is just a matter of time before someone will be hurt seriously or a fatality occurs there.
- Better inspection of projects or maybe inspection of higher quality less paint-paving more real reconstruction. Rebasing not on the agenda to often better engineering/less “afraid” of changing location. So-called paved shoulders waste of money - are plowed off and broken up due to poor support under. Long past time to go back to BASICS of old time construction with proven results.
- The weight limit on Interstate 95 should be raised to 100,000 lbs.
- Any and all that can be done to fix roads I’m for.

- Rumford Point Bridge in need of paint - bad! Route 219 needs rebuilding on North Paris section. Auburn section of road (from Minot to Auburn) - bad! State roads are well plowed and sanded in winter - super job!
- I firmly believe that toll roads and/or bridges should be considered to help pay construction costs. What better way to pay - if you use it, you help pay for it.
- Bridge maintenance is a priority.
- DOT should help the town with local bridge costs on planning to update.
- The state should be ashamed of themselves for letting some of the state roads get in the conditions that they are in. Route 117 thru Buckfield is a perfect example. The town's roads are being used by trailer trucks and much other vehicular traffic because of the condition of Route 117. If the state cannot or doesn't want to maintain the major collector highways, they should at least reimburse the towns for furnishing better roads for all traffic to use because of the very bad conditions of the state's highway system.
- We need to take a look at the fact that most of the programs set up by the state and counties are done with the larger towns in mind, as in Lewiston and Auburn. We need to start looking at the cost of fixing rural and semi-urban areas. These are the places that the people are coming from and going home to. I may go into Lewiston or Auburn, 1 or 2 times a week on average for the most part, but I travel to and from work 10 times per week, plus friends houses and running my children around all in the confines of my small town and the other small towns around me.
- Any improvement to traffic is good. There will be more traffic as time goes by.
- I have been wondering why so little improvement has been done to Route 27 north of Eustis in recent years. It almost seems like it has been abandoned?? I travel Route 27 to Canada twice a week in winter, and I am ashamed to admit is part of USA. Also on Route 16 (Stratton to Rangeley between the top of depot hill to the DOT maintenance lot all in Dallas Plantation, it needs to be ripped up and resurfaced. Shame on you!!!
- I don't want to see any money from gas taxes used on anything except repairing roads and bridges for cars & trucks. That includes support for state police. Truck fees can support that portion of enforcement. Traffic control is not repair.
- Right now our roads in Western Maine are deplorable. Spending money on bike paths is not going to help defray the cost of badly needed road work. Our priority should be with road improvement.
- Roads/bridges should continue to receive the highest priority funding as they provide the vast majority of transportation needs.

- Although I support build efficient infrastructure, I am very concerned about truck traffic in residential areas. In Poland, we are being robbed of the quiet enjoyment of our home by large truck traffic on rural roads at all hours of the day and night. The town states that they cannot regulate this problem because the roads being used are State subsidized. Your projects should be designed so that residents have some hope of maintaining rural life without trucks roaring by their homes at all hours of the day and night.
- I live on Route 16 & 27 a mile and half from major ski area (Sugarloaf/USA) whose economy depends largely on moving a large number of people safely from other parts of Maine and other states to here. Also, there's a Biomass Plant and a lumber mill about 10 miles north in Stratton that requires a large volume of big trucks. Route 27 has had some improvement in the past 30 years but not enough to be safe.
- Need increased enforcement of commercial truck regulations (especially chip & pulp trucks). Speed enforcement in rural stretches - it's a "free fire zone on all above. 4' paved shoulders a safety plus, too much paving? Harms rural character and can adversely impact rural character! and homes. Unwise planning adds much unwarranted truck traffic (i.e. chip plants away from mills - can quadruple chip and pulp traffic 20 hours a day plus increased rail use a positive. Thanks.
- Widening urban & rural roads for tourism is not my idea of Maine. The main route corridors should be improved for traffic increase.
- Route 4 should be made limited access 65 mph from Exit 12 to 108 in Livermore or at least north of Turner Village, west of its present location. This should be an immediate priority. Roads that are properly built are not hurt by 100,000 lbs. loads and federal highways should be brought up to that level.
- Speed is a very big factor in Western Maine's truck transportation. Moose, people and other wildlife are killed too frequently. No shoulder for biking or scenic viewing is another situation I would like to see addressed. Thank you. (Private plans are the emergency services for most of rural Maine!)
- Route 219 - from Route 26 to Route 140 in Hartford needs to be repaved. Route 219 lies mostly in the Town of Sumner.
- Urban arterial and collector condition and congestion must be addressed first by strong local programs embracing mass and alternative transportation systems. Root cause must be attacked.
- Route 117 from Buckfield to South Paris is terrible! The amount of traffic - especially trucks, warrants immediate attention!!!
- Minor collector roads should be rebuilt by the state 100% as they were in past!!
- Routes 2 & 4 need rebuilding. Condition is terrible.

Q2 - Would you support an urban arterial improvement program even if it meant that your taxes might increase?

- It should be paid for by higher truck and car registrations, fees and gas tax.
- This question is too general.

Q3 - Do you support MDOT's plans to reconstruct major collectors over a 20-year period?

- Route 117 - Streaked Mtn. needs paved shoulders.
- There must be enough gas taxes for this and turnpike!

Q4 - Would you support a program to improve major collectors in urban areas even if it meant that your taxes might increase?

- History has shown that road widening increases traffic and accidents. Route 4 in Turner is a prime example.

Q5 - Do you feel that bridge replacement/rehabilitation should continue to be a high priority?

- Which bridges? I do not support replacing historic metal bridges such as Leeds/Wayne, these actually help to slow traffic down.

Q6 - Would you support MDOT's bridge replacement/reconstruction efforts even if it meant that your taxes might increase?

- It depends on which bridges.

Q8 - Do you support stricter enforcement of truck weight limits on rural roads?

- I strongly oppose because they have to make a living.
- I believe the state should consider posting certain state roads in the spring along with local roads. Currently, the state roads have more activity in the spring. State of New Hampshire does a great job posting certain roads that have substandard bases and then work with contractors, loggers, trucking companies in order to provide plenty of notice. You may wish to contact Commissioner Leon Kenison at NHDOT for his comments.
- Open I-95 North of Augusta to all truck traffic.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- I would like to see more public transportation, buses, trains, out through rural areas. This may reduce some auto-light truck passenger miles driven. Right now we leave no option except to drive ourselves.
- I believe that we need to develop a cost-effective public transportation system throughout the state. Rail and air seem to make sense, however, some sort of regular, rural bus service would help.

RAILROADS

- I believe many railroad overpasses need to be looked at before AMTRAK service to begin. One in mind is the overpass on Route 121 in Mechanic Falls and on Route 11 in Mechanic Falls, both are aging, areas of concrete falling onto the roadway below. Is this a state issue or a private issue of St. Lawrence and Atlantic railroad?
- Passenger rail service can become a vital mode of transportation at some future date (see England/Europe).
- If we can get rail service back then maybe we can get some trucks off the highways by hauling freight via rail service. It would reduce congestion, improve safety and preserve roads to some extent.
- We need to reestablish rail service for cargo as well as passengers. Cargo by truck is inefficient and costly to roads. Suggest federal rail renewal program!!
- Increased tourism and commercial visitation to Western Maine may benefit from a fully integrated intermodal passenger system. To suggest scheduled rail or air traffic into the area without addressing local transport requirements is irresponsible.

Q 14 -Do you support the return of passenger rail service to Region 7?

- No, it will bring in crime and damage the environment.
- Not if it involves draining highway funds.

TAXES

- State taxes are too high now. We are the heaviest or near heaviest taxed state in the nation. We must find a better way of spending our money to get improvements to roads, etc. without increasing taxes.
- Infrastructure was the primary purpose of State Government. Originally taxes were limited for that purpose. Now one government is into everything. I would strongly urge a return to priority of infrastructure even at the cost of other programs - rather than an increase in taxes.
- Minimize government regulation & involvement in intrastate (and interstate!) issues to reduce tax burden & improve usability.
- We do not need any new taxes. The State of Maine is taxed too much already.

MISCELLANEOUS

- MDOT and other state agencies may be overloaded - caution to added responsibilities. There are many complaints concerning the length of time to obtain permits holding up development in many areas.